

SPEAKER BAACK: Senator Withem.

SENATOR WITHEM: Amendment 1294 is, again, noncontroversial bills coming through the Education Committee. One we have found is...is critical to get passed this session. One is an issue that was controversial, but our ultimate solution to it seems to have most people relatively supportive. Let me go through the three different things that are done. First of all, 1294 amends the contents of LB 96. That was a bill dealing with the caucus system of nominating and electing school board members. There is one school district in the state, District 66, Westside in Omaha, that chooses its school board members in a fashion different from all others...all other Class III school districts in the state. As opposed to a primary election nominating and a...and a general election electing, what they do is they have a caucus, to which all residents of the school district may attend. They nominate candidates at...at that caucus, and then they elect candidate...they elect their members at the primary election. There has been criticism from some members of District 66 objecting to this system, wanting us to change it, do away with their specific authorization to conduct elections in this fashion. There are people in District 66 that like it. LB 96, as it came out of committee, is what you have before us now in this amendment, and that simply says that...that the people in...that the residents of District 66 will be given the right to petition, and if a significant number of them, similar to the number of people required to sign other signatures (sic), sign this petition, then it will be put to a vote as to whether they want to keep their caucus system or move to the more traditional system. And I believe that this may not meet the needs of all the critics of the caucus system entirely, but it does give them an option that they don't have now. And the school district of District 66, to my knowledge, is not objecting to this change. Second change was LB 349, originally introduced, this is a bill introduced by the private postsecondary career schools to provide a system whereby students could recover their tuition if a school, one of the private postsecondary career schools closed midway through. Doesn't happen very often, but occasionally it does, and when it does students are out the tuition and they don't have an ability then to get educated. What this would do, it would put a fee on those schools, that fee would go into a fund until it reached about \$150,000. There is a cap, and I'm not sure exactly what the cap of the fund is, but that money would be used to pay back the tuition of students that...that were attending the school